

# Visalia

# Times-Delta



117th YEAR — NO. 225 VISALIA, CALIFORNIA, SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 1976

Oldest Newspaper In The San Joaquin Valley — Founded 1859 — A Speidel Newspaper

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## Krebs Responds To Criticism By Board

By DOUG HOAGLAND  
Times-Delta Staff Writer

Rep. John Krebs, D-Fresno, brought his case on Mineral King to Visalia Friday and outlined in detail why he cannot support development as proposed by the U.S. Forest Service.

At a public hearing attended by 150 boisterous persons, the freshmen legislator answered many of the questions raised by Tulare County supervisors concerning his opposition to development. The board's objections were detailed in a letter sent to the congressman Wednesday.

He countered statements made by supervisors, individually and collectively, on the impact of developing

Mineral King to the scale proposed by Walt Disney Productions.

He focused particular attention on the issues of:

—The significant air pollution which would result from full-scale development.

—The failure to find any agency to pay for the improvements on the Mineral King access road.

—The overwhelming public support he has received since announcing his opposition to development.

At the same time, the Fresno Democrat outlined his plans to legislatively incorporate Mineral King into the Sequoia National Park. While this would preclude full-scale

development, Krebs said his bill would provide for some form of recreation facilities. In the past, Krebs' administrative assistant, Dennis Gaab, has mentioned the possibility of some ski facilities.

Krebs said he would call upon the forest service to draft a plan which would take into consideration the need for recreation opportunities in the area, but that he could not tell that agency what specific facilities to include.

"I can't sit here and say this and this and this has to be there," he told the Times-Delta after the two-hour session.

In reponse to a question by Supervisor Donald Hillman, Krebs said if the valley was included in the park system he would personally prefer to see private

enterprise handle the limited development.

He said he could not so specify in his bill, but that he would not support governmental involvement.

Krebs also gave assurances to the predominantly young crowd that he would seek public input on his bill. While Krebs announced he plans to introduce such legislation within two weeks he doubted whether it would be brought to a vote during this session of Congress. The intervening time would allow adequate opportunity for interested persons to submit suggestions, he explained.

There are no assurances such a bill would be approved by the Congress, Krebs added.

In attempting to clarify his position on

Mineral King development, Krebs countered statements in the board's letter about the negligible air pollution which would result from the cars traveling to Mineral King.

In their letter, supervisors maintained only a 0.2 per cent increase in Valley air pollution would result from cars bound for the resort area. They cited the final environmental impact statement (EIS) as their source.

Krebs countered with statistics which estimated 2.8 million persons traveling in 900,000 cars would visit a fully developed Mineral King project each year.

"You don't have to be an air pollution expert to be concerned about the influx of autos to the Valley," Krebs said.

"It is unrealistic to assume that an additional 900,000 cars would not have more than a passing effect on the Valley."

With obvious reference to earlier statements by Supervisors Robert Harrell and Raymond Muller, both farmers, that they were not worried about the impact on crops from the increased traffic, Krebs said he had received letters from several influential county growers expressing their concern over the pollution.

Krebs said he was mindful of such concern in deciding to oppose full-scale development.

"I was too apprehensive to overlook this aspect of the situation," he said.

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Krebs added that the National Air Resources Board is expected to release its study soon on the pollution impact of Mineral King Development. He said he would be "very surprised" if its views did not reflect "continued apprehension."

The Fresno Democrat also assailed the statement made last week by Harrell that the board had received indications that the forest service would be willing to help finance improving the Mineral King access road.

Krebs said the chief of that agency told him only this week that last year the forest service spent only \$10 million on less than 25 miles of recreation road throughout the nation. Krebs said he had been authorized by the forest service to announce that it had no funds to finance the Mineral King road, a project estimated at between \$18 and \$21 million.

Because both the supervisors and Walt Disney Productions are on record against financing such a project and the State of California cannot afford to do so, Krebs said full-scale development is unrealistic.

Aside from environmental factors, Krebs said considerations such as financing of the road make full-scale development impractical in the 1970s.

"And we never know what will happen in the 80s," he added.

The Fresno congressman said he has been encouraged by the support he has received since announcing his position 12 days ago. From the date his stand was released, March 15, until three days ago, Krebs said he had received 72 communications from Visalia, both through the mail and over the telephone. Of that number, he said 66 supported his position and six were opposed.

Krebs humorously noted of 14 opposition communications he had received from Porterville, 13 were telegrams which had been postmarked at the same time. With a sly grin, the legislator said such a tactic indicated "no class." The congressman also received six letters from Porterville supporting his position.

In the last three days, Krebs said, he received a total of 56 letters, of which 53 supported his stand for limited development and three were opposed.

Krebs' strongly-supportive mail ran contrary to the results of the Times-Delta's straw poll which were released Friday.

A total of 2,438 ballots were cast over a one-week period and those voting narrowly favored development over preservation of the valley as it is now. The vote tally was 1,290 for development and 1,148 against.

The congressman, who last week criticized the poll for not including his proposal for limited development, discounted the poll once again.

"I tried to say that no one could intelligently vote in that poll without the third alternative and I mean that constructively," Krebs said.

In defending his opposition to full-scale development, Krebs assailed several other points raised by supervisors in various statements made during the last two weeks.

He said he could find no evidence, as purported by Harrell, that the Brown administration was considering endorsing the Mineral King project because of the jobs involved.

He said he had checked with Clare Dedrick, secretary of the State Resources Department, for verification of the statement and that she had found nothing to substantiate it.

He also questioned the inconsistency of statements made by Harrell and Muller about the number of jobs linked to Mineral King and the number mentioned by supervisors in their letter to him this week.

In interviews with the Times-Delta, the two supervisors had mentioned 2,500 as the number of jobs jeopardized if Mineral King development is blocked. The board's formal letter referred to

1,000 jobs on a continuing basis which are tied to the project.

No matter the number, Krebs said the jobs issue was a false one for supervisors to discuss.

"In all fairness, we shouldn't talk about the loss of 1,000 jobs that we never had to begin with," the congressman said.

His reported involvement with the Sierra Club, arch foe of the development of Mineral King, also was discounted by Krebs.

He said he is not a member of the organization, is not particularly close to it and has rejected help from members to help draft his proposed legislation.

"I like to run my own show," he said. "For any group to write legislation for me would be a dangerous practice for me to follow," he said.

Krebs also devoted considerable time countering criticisms that he had failed to take a position soon enough on Mineral King and that he had received inadequate input from the citizens of Tulare County.

"It took me considerable time to form a position for only one reason," he said. "It was due to the importance of the project. I had to get as much information as possible."

He also said he had considered study of the final EIS "a must." That report

was issued the last week in February.

The suggestion that he should have held public hearings in the county before making a decision also was criticized by Krebs. He said he had discussed Mineral King with the board last summer and that he explored the issue with individual citizens on the numerous trips he has made to the district.

Furthermore, he had "every reason to believe" that if supervisors had further views on the issue they would have communicated with him in the intervening months.

The replies of supervisors to Krebs' detailed response to their criticisms was low-keyed.

Only Muller spoke at length in response to Krebs and his remarks were prefaced with the statement that he believed the Fresno had done "a tremendous job" in Congress.

He did say, however, he believed Krebs' proposed legislation to be "a hasty decision."

"We all came to this country for opportunities," the Terra Bella supervisor said. "We had people saying 'no, no, no' to development of the West. If we had listened to them we never would have developed the West."

"This country and world need progress."

Muller said supervisors are just as

concerned as Krebs over the environmental impact of Mineral King development, but he said consideration of the potential job opportunities is just as important.

"We have to keep those opportunities open," he said.

Board chairman Harrell, reiterating his position that recreation facilities are needed at Mineral King, said Krebs' legislation had "panicked us."

He said the board and the public "would look forward" to the Mineral King bill and that it would have the community's "full attention."

Despite the generally passive response to Krebs, Supervisor Fred Batkin said he feels the board "had not lost anything."

"Krebs did a good job in disputing (the supervisors' letter)," the Dinuba supervisor said.

"He answered the allegations. Whether he answered them to my satisfaction is another matter."

Supervisor Donald Baird joined his colleague in praising the congressman for his articulate style.

"This was 'F. Lee Bailey' Krebs," the Strathmore supervisor quipped. "He presented his case in a very good fashion, but I have not changed my opinion that the overwhelming majority of Tulare County citizens favors the board of supervisors over Krebs."

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